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香港觀鳥會
THE
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By email only

8 February 2018

Dear Mr. Tong,

Comments on the Project Profile for Yuen Long Barrage Scheme (ESB-307/2018)

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) considers that it is important that all ecological sensitive receivers (ESRs) and all ecological impacts of the proposed barrage scheme are properly identified and comprehensively assessed in order to ensure the proposed development will not have adverse ecological impacts on birds, egrettries and the ecological integrity of the Deep Bay area. We noted that various ESRs and potential impacts were identified in the Project Profile (PP), however, there are still some inadequacies. The project proponent should check with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for the exact locations of all ESRs, such that the corresponding studies and assessments can be conducted accurately and comprehensively.



1. Ecological sensitive habitats

Kam Tin River, Shan Pui River, fishponds, Mai Po Marshes SSSI, Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site and Wetland Conservation Area are important habitats for birds, particularly wintering and migratory waterbirds and wetland dependent birds. They are identified as ESRs in the PP. We consider that other wetland habitats, such as freshwater/brackish water ponds, reedbeds, mangroves and mudflats, should also be included as ESRs. All other habitats identified within the Study Area of the project should be properly assessed as well.

2. Concerns on the Great Cormorant roosting site

The plantations in Nam Sang Wai (NSW) is a regionally important roosting site for Great Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and should be identified as an ESR. Great Cormorants gather to roost in the trees at night¹, but some of them were also seen using the roosting

¹ Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve, Nam Sang Wai and Lok Ma Chau Mitigation Wetland are the known evening roosting sites in the Deep Bay area. Evening counts are conducted to get a more accurate

sites during the day. The trees in NSW which the birds roost are approximately 600 m to 1.4 km from the project site and supports 30-60% of the Deep Bay population². In January 2017, 4184 individuals of Great Cormorants were recorded at NSW in the evening, which is about 56% of the Deep Bay population and 4% of the regional population³.

3. Concerns on the Tung Ching Lane Egretty

82 nests were recorded at the Tung Shing Lane egretty during the summer of 2017, which comprises of Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) and Chinese Pond Heron (*Ardeola bacchus*)⁴. It is the second largest egretty in the Deep Bay area. The PP identified the egretty as an ESR. We consider that egretty flight line surveys should be conducted to identify the foraging areas and flight lines of the breeding ardeids, such that the impacts of the proposed project can be properly assessed.

4. Phasing of different components of the project site

Besides avoiding construction works during the winter season when more birds utilizes the project site and its surroundings, careful phasing of construction program should also be considered in summer to avoid/minimize disturbance impacts during the breeding season of ardeids (i.e. generally between March and August inclusively). The risk of bird collision arising from the project (e.g. noise barriers) should also be minimized.

5. Impacts of the barrage on Yuen Long Nullah and Shan Pui River

The proposed barrage would permanently change a section of the Yuen Long nullah from a brackish environment with tidal influence to a largely freshwater habitat. The ecological value of this section of the nullah and its bird usage should be adequately identified and assessed. The impacts of the barrage on the tidal patterns of Shan Pui River and its associated impacts on birds should also be carefully studied.

6. Nearby concurrent project

To our understanding, the construction phase of the Yuen Long Effluent Polishing Plant is proposed to be from 2019 to 2025, which overlaps with the construction of the current

information on their wintering population.

² According to January counts of roosting Great Cormorant 2005-2016. The number of roosting Great Cormorants in Nam Sang Wai ranges from 3030 to 6035 while the Deep Bay population ranges from 8142 to 11144.

³ Anon. 2017. Monthly Waterbird Monitoring Biannual Report 2 (October 2016 to March 2017), Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site Waterbird Monitoring Programme 2016-17. Report by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government..

⁴ Anon, 2017. Summer 2017 Report: Egretty Counts in Hong Kong with particular reference to the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site. Report by The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government.

project (i.e. 2021 - 2029). As the two project sites are only approximately 1.2 km apart from each other and they have similar ecological sensitive receivers, the Yuen Long Effluent Polishing Plant should also be listed as a concurrent project.

The HKBWS hopes that our comments would be taken into consideration. Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Woo Ming Chuan', written in a cursive style.

Woo Ming Chuan
Senior Conservation Officer
The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

cc.
The Conservancy Association
Designing Hong Kong
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